

Dioramas are at the crossroads of artistic, scientific and cultural practices. They bring together painters, sculptors, scientists, and collectors, thus providing an opportunity to reflect on the polyvalence of these actors and the definition of their expertise. In 1822, the painter and scientist Louis Daguerre coined the term “diorama” when describing his theater, the word diorama literally meaning “seeing through.” However, dioramas are not merely images or displays: they are also physical objects made of multiple materials and composite and hybrid things, created through cultural interaction and physical encounter. Multiple hands as well as various visions are involved in the process of their creation. Dioramas therefore allow for the study of contact zones and material exchanges between private and public spheres, as well as transcultural interactions in a global context.

**Institut für Kunstgeschichte  
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Natural History Museum, Los Angeles, 2016 © Noémie Etienne  
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# Seeing Through? The Materiality of Dioramas (1600-2010)

**Thursday 1 - Friday 2 December 2016  
University of Bern**



International Conference

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1-2 December 2016  
University of Bern

Room 304, University of Bern  
Hauptgebäude, Hochschulstrasse 4,  
3012 Bern

## Thursday December 1

9:30 Introduction

Noémie Etienne & Nadia Radwan, University of Bern

## NATURE

Chair: Marie-Theres Stauffer, University of Geneva

10:00 Liliane Ehrhart, Princeton University — The Marquis de Sade's Confrontation with Gaetano Zumbo's *The Plague*, a Macabre 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Wax Diorama

10:40 Valérie Kobi, Bielefeld University — Nature Enclosed in a Box. Early Forms of Natural History Dioramas in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe

Coffee Break

11:40 Guillaume Legall, Paris IV — Aquatic Dioramas

12:20 Thierry Laugée, Paris IV — This Sculpture Underneath the Skin

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch Break

## HISTORY

Chair: Nadia Radwan, University of Bern

14:30 Noémie Etienne, University of Bern — Native American Dioramas in New York, 1900

15:10 Jean-Roch Bouiller, MuCEM — Ecological Units by Georges-Henri Rivière, « La vie mode d'emploi »

15:50 Sam Omans, NYU & Xenia Vyutelva, Columbia University, — Soviet Dioramas at the Polar Museum, St Petersburg

16:30 Mercedes Volait, InVisu (CNRS/INHA) — A Cultural Invariant? On Historicist/Orientalist Installations in the Private Sphere and Beyond in France and the Middle East

## Friday December 2

## SPACE

Chair: Eva Troelenberg, Max Plank Institute, Florence

10:00 Francine Giese, University of Zurich — Rafael Contreras' Alhambra Models – the Creation of an Illusionistic Vision

10:40 Alexander Streitberger, Université Catholique de Louvain, — Display Clash. The Diorama and/as Wunderkammer in Contemporary Art

Coffee Break

11:40 Veronica Peselmann, Freie Universität, Berlin — Film and Diorama in China: Cao Fei's Post-Apocalyptic "La Town" (2014)

12:20 Florence Ostende, Barbican Art Gallery — The Myth of the Great Hall: The Challenge of Exhibiting Dioramas

13:00: Conclusive Discussion